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Book Reviews.

Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament. By GEORGE ADAM SMITH, D.D., LL.D. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Co., 1901. Pp. xii+325. \$1.50.

The theme of these eight lectures, delivered on the Lyman Beecher foundation at Yale University in 1899, is one which will attract many a student of the Bible and many a Christian preacher. And for the treatment of just this theme we can think of no one more admirably qualified than the accomplished professor of Old Testament language and literature at Glasgow, who in recent years has thrilled so many students with his sane, eloquent, and religiously impressive expositions of the book of Isaiah and the book of the Twelve Prophets.

“The objects of these lectures are, in the main, three: a statement of the Christian right of criticism; an account of the modern critical movement so far as the Old Testament is concerned; and an appreciation of its effects upon the Old Testament as history and as the record of a divine revelation.”

The liberty and duty of Old Testament criticism the author infers from a study of the New Testament. While we are led specially to hallow the Old Testament as the Bible of Jesus, we are reminded that Jesus was its first critic, and while the apostles attributed to the Old Testament an exceedingly high and binding authority, the very methods which they follow in quoting from it render criticism necessary.

After establishing the right of criticism, the author gives a very clear and succinct lecture on the character and course of criticism, especially defending it against the charge that it rests on literary data only, regardless of archæology, and emphasizing the truth that, while paying attention to literary considerations, criticism is primarily based on certain inevitable historical facts.

What, now, is left if we accept even the results claimed by the more advanced critics? We still have the biographies of the men of Israel from Samuel onward; for criticism, accepting these in the main, helps rather than hinders by the corrections occasionally made. We have

also in the early history prepared by the prophetic historians abundant ethical teaching of paramount value and of permanent authority. Now are we obliged to give up our belief in divine revelation—in a revelation of the character and will of God? For how came the religious ideas of the Jews to differ so much, not only from those entertained by the Aryan Greeks and Romans, but from those cherished by other Semitic tribes, if it were not true that the Mind which their minds and the Heart which their hearts sought behind the phenomena of nature and history was no less urgent and forward than their own in the desire and effort to meet? (p. 143).

Criticism leads us to change the methods of Old Testament study. It leads us to look for the spirit of Christ, rather than for literal predictions of Christ, and helps us, while looking for traces of this spirit, to note the evidence, not only of the stern righteousness, but also of the gentle grace of Yahweh.

In the chapter on the teaching of the prophets one might almost wish that the author had given less space to the historic review of the manner in which the Old Testament has been treated (interesting and valuable as this summary is), and given more space to the homiletic value of the prophets' teaching to the preacher of today. In a series of lectures on preaching, in a book on homiletics, we are led to desire this, and our desire is only intensified as we note the comprehensive analysis, the eloquent suggestions, and the brilliant illustrations which the author gives in the all too brief space which he allots to this topic.

The book closes with a lecture on the wisdom literature, in which there is a suggestive and eloquent treatment of the drama of Job, and valuable suggestions are given as to the use of the book of Proverbs in preaching.

This book cannot but be welcome to many Bible students of our day. Its clear exposition, its luminous and illuminating sentences, its lofty eloquence, its high ethical teaching, and its profoundly religious spirit, will come with reassuring influence to many who fear that criticism has destroyed the religious value of the Old Testament, and will bring fresh inspiration to many a preacher to stir the hearts of the men of his own day, as did the prophets of Israel, by applying to the problems of his own time the ethical principles which are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

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